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ABSTRACT

This paper describes three classroom settings in which students with disabilities were successfully and fully included. In the first setting, a multi-age classroom has been established for first and second grade students with mild disabilities, students at-risk for academic failure, and typically developing students. A general education teacher, a reading specialist, and a special education teacher collaborate to teach the students. In the second setting, a fourth grade general education teacher and a special education teacher co-teach in an inclusive setting with 28 to 30 students who are typically developing, have mild disabilities, or are considered gifted and talented. In the third setting, a special education teacher and an instructional aide participate on two middle school teams to modify materials and provide additional pull-out support to fifth and sixth grade students with mild to moderate special needs. The importance of professional collaboration in all three settings is stressed. (DB)

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# SUCESSFUL INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: MODIFYING CONTENT DELIVERY AND MATERIALS IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

PRESENTED AT THE SECOND ANNUAL CHINA-U.S. CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION
Beijing, People's Republic of China
July 17, 1998

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This presentation focuses on the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms. Teachers must attempt to meet the needs of all students who enter today's classrooms. Inclusive education should not be synonymous with dumping, or returning a student with a disability to general education without any support to the classroom teacher or to the student, at the expense to others in the classroom (Hardman, Drew, & Egan, 1998). The proponents of full-inclusion have argued that general education classrooms that incorporate a partnership between general and special educators result in a diverse and rich learning environment for all students (Pugach, 1996; Webber, 1997). The successful inclusion of students with disabilities in inclusive general education classrooms requires collaboration and practice in modifying content delivery and materials by general education and special education teachers. Schools that are committed to making inclusion work have found that all students gain when teachers work together to support and teach all students.

I am going to talk about three successful inclusive settings. In each case teachers, parents, and school administrators are committed to making inclusion work for all students ( Working Forum on Inclusive Schools, 1994).

In the first setting, an elementary school has established a primary team for at-risk, typically developing, and special needs students. The school principal and the teachers

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wanted to create a team environment that fostered a love for learning and provided avenues of success for all students. The team is a multi-age team which was

established for first and second grade students labeled as having mild disabilities (learning disabilities and mild mental retardation), students who have been designated at-risk for academic failure by the school's Intervention Team, and typically developing students.

A general education teacher, a Chapter One reading specialist, and a special education teacher collaborate to teach the students. One instructional aide is assigned to the team. All students on the team are assigned to their grade level homerooms and go to art, music, physical education and lunch with their grade level peers. On the team they are taught using developmentally appropriate practices. The core curriculum for first and second grade is used as much as possible. Materials are modified to reflect the different learning styles and learning rates for these students. Teachers divide the teaching responsibilities in the classroom. As part of the teaming process the teachers meet daily to devise strategies for students who are encountering difficulty in learning new material. After teaching this way for two years, the teachers have found that this setting is more responsive to the students' educational needs and that the students are making greater gains in reading, language arts, and mathematics in this inclusive setting as compared to separate classroom settings. They also find that they can more effectively teach science and social studies when they share the responsibility of planning the lessons. All three of the teachers on the team say they love the team approach, have learned from each other and wouldn't want to teach any other way. Initial concerns from parents about the team approach were overcome quickly after the first year. Nothing but praise has come to the

teachers from the parents of the children on the team as their children come home from school excited about learning.

In the second setting, a fourth grade general education teacher and a special education teacher co-teach in an inclusive classroom. This inclusive classroom has 28 to 30 students who are typically developing, have mild disabilities or are considered gifted and talented. The two teachers plan together and completely share the teaching in the classroom. They alternate weeks teaching social studies and science. Reading and Language Arts are divided by story or unit. The math instruction is divided by student level, with the general education teacher instructing the higher level students and the special education teacher instructing the lower ability level students. The teachers alternate being the lead teacher and the supporting teacher. The teachers have found that they have more time for planning because they share the responsibility of developing the lessons and that by supporting each other, they are better able to meet individual student needs.

All of the students are taught with the core curriculum for fourth grade and are prepared to take the statewide competency tests. Both teachers modify materials as needed for any student who has a special need or is having difficulty learning the lesson content. In general they provide for two levels of material modification. For example, on the 15 word per week spelling test, the typical group must use all the words to form two or three sentences with every word spelled correctly for their weekly test, the middle group is tested on spelling the words only, and the third group is given 5 to 7 of the more functional words from the weekly list to learn to spell. Another example of a

modification is a required book report which is tailored to the student's independent reading level, but has the same overall written requirements for each student. In addition to providing modifications for their own students the teachers on this team also share their modified strategies and materials with the other fourth grade teachers who encounter students who need extra support.

The teachers also have a microcomputer in the classroom for one student whose motor problems make it more efficient for him to use a word processor as oppose to writing out his assignments. Other students are encouraged to complete assignments on the class computer or to use their time in the school's microcomputer lab to work on assignments. By the end of the school year, all students have completed at least one book report using the word processor. The teachers encourage peer partners for many assignments as they find that the children learn from each other. As additional support, they request a practicum student from a local university each semester which enables them to provide one-on one tutoring or small group instruction for students as the need arises. Both teachers agree that all their students learn better in this type of collaborative setting. Parents of the special education students were initially shocked at the high expectations set for their children- they now marvel at how much their children are learning. Parents of typical children have been equally pleased with their children's progress.

In the third setting, a special education teacher and an instructional aide participate on two middle school teams to modify materials and to provide additional pull-out support to fifth and sixth grade students with mild to moderate special needs

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Once the materials are modified they can be used with any student who could benefit from them.

During the school day the special education teacher and the instructional aide spend time in individual classrooms providing support to all students who need additional help. Individual students or a small group of students are pulled out for additional instruction or for modified tests. Typically, the pull-out groups consist of about two thirds special education students and one third general education students who need additional support. General education teachers are committed to planning lessons that are applicable to all students in their classes. The teams meet weekly to discuss issues that arise with particular students. The middle school teachers believe that this collaboration has benefited all the students on both teams because not only are special education students being supported- but general education students who often floundered are now being supported.

In conclusion, educating students in inclusive classrooms can prepare them for the challenges that they will face when they leave school to become productive members of society. Collaboration among professionals who share their knowledge and skills with each other to help students reach their full potential, whether they are typical or have special needs, should be a vital part of today's schools.

**References**

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